To: Mylott, Richard[Mylott.Richard@epa.gov]
From: Mylott, Richard
Sent: Tue 8/11/2015 2:16:15 AM
Subject: EPA Gold King Mine Response Update: August 10

August 10 EPA update.

Also: http://www2.epa.gov/region8/gold-king-mine-release-emergency-response

BACKGROUND

On August 5, while investigating the Gold King Mine in Colorado, an EPA cleanup team triggered a large release of mine wastewater into Cement Creek. EPA is working closely with responders and local and state officials to monitor water contaminated by the release. The release's path flows through three of EPA's regions (Region 8 (Colorado/Utah & Southern Ute Tribe); Region 6 (New Mexico), and Region 9 (Navajo Nation). EPA has activated its Emergency Operations System to ensure coordination among its regions, laboratories and national program offices in Washington, D.C. EPA is closely coordinating with officials in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Southern Ute Tribe and Navajo Nation.

August 10 Update

EPA Region 8 has deployed a large response team to Durango and Silverton, Colorado and to several locations in New Mexico, Utah and the Navajo Reservation to coordinate with affected states, tribes and communities on various response activities and to address impacts associated with the Gold King mine wastewater release.

EPA's primary objectives include working with federal, state, tribal and local authorities to make sure that people continue to have access to safe drinking water, ensure appropriate precautions are in place for recreational use and contact with river water, evaluate impacts to wildlife and fish populations, and stop the flow of contaminated water into the watershed at the Gold King Mine site.

Aerial and ground reconnaissance indicates that the plume associated with the Gold King Mine release has dissipated downstream and there is no leading edge of contamination visible in downstream sections of the San Juan River or Lake Powell.

EPA has also taken steps to capture and treat the discharge at the Gold King mine, addressing the risk of additional downstream impacts. We have constructed four ponds at the mine site and which are treating water by lowering acidity levels and removing dissolved metals. This system is discharging treated water to Cement Creek at levels cleaner (higher pH and lower levels of metals) than pre-event, background conditions in the creek. Over the next several days, EPA will make upgrades to the system to ensure its continued operation.

EPA is collecting and assessing water quality from the Animas and San Juan Rivers daily. Over the next several days, we will be jointly evaluating data and information with partners to determine when access to the Animas River will be restored for activities and uses such as

rafting, fishing, irrigation, and drinking water. EPA, tribal, state and local officials are coordinating these decisions based on sampling data, risk screening levels, and other related factors. We do not anticipate any reopening decisions until at least August 17. The timing of these decisions could vary among local, state and tribal governments based on local conditions and by uses. Until notified otherwise, people should continue to abide by existing closures.

The assessment of impacts to wildlife and fish populations is ongoing. To date we have seen no indication of widespread fish mortality in the Animas or San Juan. Fish cages placed directly in the Animas River by the State of Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife for two days indicate one mortality out of 108 fish tested. The State will be evaluating those and other ecological impacts with partners as we move forward. EPA is also working with the New Mexico Department of Game Fish and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to investigate reports of impacts to wildlife.

EPA has established a response center in Durango, Colorado and has deployed ten On Scene Coordinators in Silverton, Durango and Farmington, New Mexico. Water quality experts and several technicians and contractors will respond to the discharge as it reaches communities in New Mexico. Two Public Information Officers (PIOs) are also on site in Durango at the Joint Information Center (JIC). Two Community Involvement Coordinators (CICs) were deployed to Farmington yesterday and met with local Navajo Chapter officials and hosted public meetings. The CICs will also partner with Navajo Nation EPA (NNEPA) and Navajo Department of Public Safety to ensure comprehensive outreach to all affected Navajo Chapters. EPA is using several contracting mechanisms to provide support for the response, which includes water quality sampling, drinking water and agricultural water distribution as well as construction and maintenance of the water treatment ponds.

In New Mexico, EPA has a team of two federal on-scene coordinators, two water quality experts and ten technicians and contractors responding to the spill as it reaches communities in the state. Additional personnel are arriving in Farmington and will total 26 employees and contractors by the end of the day. Staffing is expected to continue to grow to support outreach and door-to-door canvasing. EPA mobile command center has arrived in Farmington and will be fully operational later today. EPA is also co-locating personnel with NMED in Santa Fe to enhance planning and communication between the agencies.

EPA is continuing to collect water quality samples from nine locations in the river near intakes for Aztec, Farmington, the Lower Valley Water Users Association, the Morning Star Water Supply System and the North Star Water User Association. Each of these locations will continue to be monitored as the spill makes its way past these areas. EPA has two dedicated water quality experts available in New Mexico to assist the five drinking water systems.

Working with San Juan County, NM officials, EPA is providing alternative water supply for livestock in New Mexico.

EPA and New Mexico Environment Department are providing free water quality testing for domestic drinking water wells along the river. Teams of qualified technicians are going door-to-door to collect samples for laboratory analysis.

At 7 pm on Sunday, Aug 9, New Mexico Environment Secretary notified EPA that the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish needed help responding to reports of wildlife that may have been impacted by the release. EPA immediately connected NM Fish & Game with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). NM Fish & Game is sending one biologist and two game wardens to assess the situation today and will follow up with USFWS. The USFWS has requested EPA contract with a wildlife rehabilitator to assist with cleaning any animals. USFWS will provide capture and oversight of the operations for the state.

On Saturday (Aug. 8) the President of the Navajo Nation declared a State of Emergency for the San Juan River valley. On Sunday, President Begaye and his staff toured the Gold King Mine Site. R9 public information officer Rusty Harris-Bishop escorted the President on the tour. The President and his staff then attended the community meeting in Durango.

Navajo officials have reacted quickly, assessing their well fields and drinking and irrigation water intake systems and issuing a precautionary "do not use" public service announcement regarding water from potentially impacted sources.

EPA Region 9 held a conference call Sunday with Navajo Nation EPA (NNEPA) and Navajo Department of Public Safety.

The Navajo EPA surface water monitoring program (Shiprock Office) collected water and sediment samples from the San Juan River - prior to the spill impact. Region 9 has provided 6 START contractors to coordinate and conduct increased sample collection and lab analysis in conjunction with NNEPA. This joint EPA/NNEPA river sampling program has commenced focusing on the San Juan between Shiprock/Hogback, NM area and Mexican Hat, UT and will continue for the forseeable future.

A Region 9 OSC reported to Farmington on Monday to assist. NNEPA also requested drinking water sampling support immediately for Navajo operated water intakes. NNEPA and USEPA drinking water experts agreed to inventory and assess water sources including private wells and intakes.

Region 9 will be providing assistance to Navajo NTUA (utilities) to deliver water to the areas impacted by the Gold King Mine Spill - starting with the Montezuma Creek area. NTUA is sourcing the water from their Sweetwater wells and filling up the service tanks in the affected areas. The ERRS contractor will be providing assistance in the transportation of these waters.

Two EPA Community Involvement Coordinators (CICs) arrived in Farmington Sunday. The CICs will partner with NNEPA and NN Department of Public Safety to ensure comprehensive outreach to all affected Navajo Chapters. The CICs have begun working with local Navajo Chapter officials and will participate in public meetings at Aneth and Oljato on 8/10.

Claims Process

EPA is committed to taking responsibility for the discharge and impacts to affected communities. Detailed instructions and links to electronic forms was provided in the August 9, 2015, update.

Beginning on Tuesday, August 11, 2015, claimants may submit signed electronic versions of Standard Form 95 to EPA for the Gold King Mine Release via e-mail at **R8_GKM_Claims@epa.gov**.

Although EPA's regulations state that the EPA has six months to resolve a claim, the Agency will make every effort to respond to Gold King Mine release claims as soon as possible. Claims must be presented to EPA within two years after the claim accrues.

Public Health Update

The downward trend in water quality concentrations for metals continues for the sites sampled. Cement Creek 14th Street Bridge, only had one sampling event, so a trend could not be developed. The Animas River is an open water source and not considered potable until it has been properly treated.

Washing with soap and water after contact with the river water is a sound public health practice to minimize exposure to the metals, and also any bacteria that maybe present in the untreated river water. Anyone who feels illness as a result of exposure to metals or pathogenic organisms in the river water should contact their local health care provider.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) recommends that additional monitoring should be conducted until the river returns to pre-release levels. If local health care providers have questions they can contact the ATSDR Regional Office at 303-312-7013. ATSDR's Regional Office can arrange a consultation between the health care provider and ATSDR physician.

Additional information about exposure with metals at
http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/substances/index.asp